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ABSTRACT

This publication is one of a series designed to inform and assist those responsible for foreign language instruction, including teachers, administrators, supervisors, and those engaged in teacher education. The complete series serves as a curriculum guide. The format of the series is such that it can be revised so as to keep materials current. Each publication is punched so that it may be placed in a binder. Part one of this volume discusses the principles involved in setting up a quality language program, including quality standards set by the Board of Education, linguistic and cultural objectives, and tangible as well as intangible results. Part two examines the nature of language and discusses the development of language teaching in the United States. Part three deals with the nature of learning and the successful language learner, with a focus on the elementary, the junior high, and the senior high school level. (Author/AM)

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Foreign Languages in Virginia Schools

PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES
WHAT IS LANGUAGE?
THE LANGUAGE LEARNER

Preface

This publication is one of a series designed to provide information and assistance to those responsible for foreign language instruction, including teachers, administrators, supervisors, and those engaged in the preparation of teachers. The complete series serves as a curriculum guide. A list of the titles follows.

The series format offers a number of advantages. It can be used easily and revised as needed to keep the material current. Each publication is punched so that it can be placed in a ring binder. In the future titles may be added, changed, or deleted as needs suggest.

All of the publications are of interest to teachers. Number 6, *Notes to the Administrator and Counselor*, is directed specifically to superintendents, supervisors, principals, and guidance counselors.

A few introductory remarks concerning the study of language are in order. A language is a skill, a tool, a humanistic discipline, an art, and a social science. It is the outstanding distinguishing factor between man and animal. People use it to communicate basic human needs and thoughts, to make money, to entertain, and to express emotions.

The rationale for language study has become more comprehensive in recent years. At the core of the rationale is the fact that knowledge of another language permits a person to live in an expanded environment. Today, more than ever before, it increases the flexibility of job seekers, especially when combined with a vocation or profession. And finally, the knowledge of another language leads to a better understanding of self and of one's own culture.

I commend this series of publications to all of those concerned with teaching and learning foreign languages with the hope that their task will be made easier and more successful.

Helen P. Warriner
Supervisor of Foreign Languages

Foreign Languages in Virginia Schools

Publications in the Series

1. Philosophy and Objectives/What is Language/
The Language Learner
2. Teaching a Language
3. Testing and Evaluation
4. Individualizing Instruction
5. Learning Aids/Instructional Personnel
6. Curricular Components/Notes to the Admini-
strator and Counselor
7. Career Education and Foreign Languages/En-
riching and Explaining the Foreign Language
Program

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Philosophy and Objectives

INTRODUCTION

The public school is an institution of a democratic society established to provide educational opportunities for all children. Every young Virginian, as every other young American, has an equal right to avail himself or herself of these opportunities.

One of the key objectives of the *Standards of Quality and Objectives for Public Schools in Virginia* enacted by the General Assembly in 1972 is to help students "to understand and appreciate people of different nationalities and ethnic groups and their contributions to the development of our nation and culture."¹ The foreign language program assists in opening doorways to human understanding and helps to provide a means by which the youth of Virginia may become better prepared for world citizenship.

Foreign languages are not necessarily those that are spoken outside the United States. Large concentrations of speakers of Spanish are not uncommon, especially in urban centers. A growing awareness of such communities, coupled with the increasing number of foreign-born persons who live, reside or travel in the United States, provides an additional reason for studying foreign languages.

Unless children have severe physical, mental, or emotional handicaps, they are capable of learning a language; in fact, they master the basic structure and vocabulary of their mother tongue before entering the first grade. The processes involved in learning a second language are similar to those involved in learning the native language, although the school environment is different from the native language-learning setting.

The public schools are responsible for offering all students the opportunity to learn a second language, regardless of the curriculum in which they are enrolled, their vocational intentions or scholastic achievement, or the extent to which they wish to pursue the language.

¹ Commonwealth of Virginia, *Standards of Quality and Objectives for Public Schools in Virginia 1972-74*. (Richmond, Virginia: Department of Education, 1972). p. i.

The language teacher must seek methods of instruction which make second language learning a rewarding and profitable experience for all students. Those methods must be designed to compensate as much as possible for the limitations imposed by the school's conditions (infrequency of contact with the language, absence of numerous native speakers, etc.).

THE STANDARDS OF QUALITY

The methods and conditions required for learning are not the same for all students. Children and adults learn in different ways and at varying rates. The following classroom and management objectives adopted by the Board of Education to accompany the Standards of Quality offer appropriate guidance for the foreign language teacher:

In accordance with local policies and regulations, the teacher shall be responsible for discharging the following major duties:

- a. The teacher shall provide for the humanizing of instruction in the classroom. To accomplish this, the teacher should:
 - (i) Know the academic strengths and weaknesses of each child;
 - (ii) Know the home and community environment of each child;
 - (iii) Treat each child as an individual in accordance with his needs;
 - (iv) Understand and appreciate each child as an individual of worth; and
 - (v) Help each child to recognize his potential, to develop his abilities, and to assume his responsibilities as a member of the group.
- b. The teacher shall provide for individual differences in the classroom. To accomplish this, the teacher should:
 - (i) Provide different subject matter and learning experiences and have different achievement standards for individuals with different abilities and/or past achievements; and
 - (ii) Provide opportunities for pupils to work independently on meaningful

- tasks that derive from and contribute to the planned activities of the group.
- c. The teacher shall make use of available instructional materials and other resources that are appropriate to the needs of the pupils. To accomplish this, the teacher should supplement the textbook and make appropriate use of:
 - (i) Additional reading materials, such as library books and reference materials, magazines, and newspapers;
 - (ii) Educational television and other audio-visual aids;
 - (iii) Demonstrations, dramatizations, and other classroom activities;
 - (iv) Field trips;
 - (v) Resource persons and school-related youth organizations; and
 - (vi) Individual and group projects, in or out of school.
 - d. The teacher shall organize learning activities to achieve specific objectives which should include:
 - (i) The development of needed skills;
 - (ii) The understanding of specific concepts;
 - (iii) The solution of meaningful problems; and
 - (iv) The development of wholesome attitudes.
 - e. The teacher shall provide a favorable psychological environment for learning. To accomplish this, the teacher should:
 - (i) Develop and use questioning techniques that require pupils to employ the higher cognitive processes as well as to demonstrate retention and comprehension;
 - (ii) Encourage pupils to express their ideas in group discussions; and
 - (iii) Involve pupils in planning and conducting class activities under the guidance and direction of the teacher.
 - f. The teacher shall evaluate the progress of students. To do this, the teacher should:
 - (i) Emphasize the application of knowledge to new situations;
 - (ii) Include achievement in all areas of instruction, habits of work, attitudes, personal traits, and group relationships; and
 - (iii) Help each pupil to develop the ability to evaluate his own progress and to involve him in the evaluation process.²

PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF PROGRAMS

This guide is based on the following principles:

- All children should have the opportunity to study a second language;
- Language learning should provide knowledge of humanistic and practical values;
- Students should develop a deeper comprehension of their own culture by exploring another;
- Second language should be a pleasurable and intellectually profitable experience;
- In conventional foreign language classes stress should be placed on both oral and written communication. (In special classes, the degree of emphasis assigned to listening, speaking, reading, and writing may vary because of the chosen objectives.)

OBJECTIVES

Language learning includes linguistic and cultural objectives.

The linguistic objectives include:

- Comprehension of the language when it is spoken at normal speed and when it is concerned with subject matter commensurate with the student's experience;
- Effective communication in the spoken language, using standards of pronunciation, intonation, and structure acceptable to educated native speakers;
- The ability to read and comprehend, without recourse to direct translation, material of average difficulty on a given level;
- The ability to write on topics within the scope of the learner's experience, using authentic patterns of the foreign language.

Those objectives should not falsely convey to teachers, students, or parents the idea that students will be fluent speakers after they have completed one, two, or even five years of foreign language in an academic setting. Fluency comes only after prolonged and intensive contact with a foreign language. Students should achieve those objectives to a degree commensurate with their aptitude for learning a second language and with the amount and quality of their experience in studying a second language.

A unique perspective is involved in teaching Latin, a classical language. The ultimate linguistic objective of instruction in that subject is to help students develop the ability to read the language fluently and with understanding and avoid laborious word-for-word translation. Although less emphasis is placed on the acquisition of listening and

² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

speaking skills, they should not be neglected. In fact, the student's first introduction to Latin should be through hearing and speaking the patterns of the language. Practice in these two areas leads to greater comprehension of printed matter.

The cultural objectives of language learning should include the following goals:

- Understanding and appreciating the national and individual mores of the people who speak the language;
- Knowledge of the history and significant physical features of the areas where the language is spoken;
- Comprehension of the foreign culture's political, economic, and social development;
- Appreciation of the fine arts and science of the foreign people and their contributions to world civilization;
- Awareness of language as the basic factor in cultural communication.

OUTCOMES

An effective language program should produce both tangible and intangible results, including:

- Awareness of the humanitarian values of learning a second language and of the direct benefits to the welfare and happiness of mankind;
- Acquisition of language skills which give the student a new channel of communication and means of self-expression;
- Knowledge, appreciation, and acceptance of other cultures;

- Insight into a deeper knowledge of the native language;
- Enrichment of the student's native language;
- Appreciation of other cultures' contributions to the development of our nation;
- Appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of language;
- The realization that language learning can be pleasurable and that hard work and pleasure need not be separated;
- Motivation to continue the study of a second language in depth and to undertake the learning of other languages, both ancient and modern;
- Knowledge of how to study and learn a second language;
- Acquisition of ideals which help pave the way to international harmony;
- Increased development of good listening habits and auditory discrimination;
- Development of attitudes of tolerance, cooperation, acceptance of responsibility, self-discipline, and scholarship;
- Development of more efficient study habits;
- Understanding the need for accuracy in the preparation of all spoken and written material.

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What Is Language?

INTRODUCTION

What is language?

It is a set of symbols used by people to convey meaning. The symbols may be vocal or written, or may include signs or signals that are accepted as tools for transmitting thoughts and ideas.

Human speech, with its patterned system of articulate vocal sounds, is the basis of all language. Although movements of the hands, face, and body may be used to emphasize and sometimes clarify the thought expressed, such actions are not speech; they emanate from the spoken word, a symbol, in itself, of concepts and objects.

Writing, also, is not speech but a representation of the spoken word. "Thus, with a visual system of representation, we are two removes from reality. . . . It is as well to stay as close to reality as possible; that is why the study of language is a study of sounds and what sounds can do."¹

For sounds to be language, they must be more than mere noises produced by human speech organs and transmitted from one person to another via sound waves. They also must "be based upon a previous understanding among their users that they carry certain definite meanings."² Each language possesses its own sequences of sound which have particular meanings.

Each language has its own pattern, unique to its native speakers and independent of the patterns of other languages.³ For example, if a speaker of English discovers that he has written the initial consonant cluster *zdr* he immediately rejects it as erroneous because he knows that the English language does not contain that cluster. A speaker of Russian, however, would readily accept that same pattern because it is common in that language.

No language is uniform for all who speak it. Differences are expressed in idiolects and in dialects. Idiolect is the speech pattern of a single individual at a particular time in his life. Dialect

is the speech pattern of a group of people situated in a certain geographic area and in constant communication with one another. Among forces contributing to dialectal differences are conquest and occupation, population migrations, immigrations, physical geography, and social structure.⁴

Language is in a constant state of change which permeates all its segments—sounds, words, structure, and meaning. Of all the segments, sounds are the most stable. Any language which is no longer spoken has ceased to change and is considered "dead." That word, however, does not mean what it implies to some people. For instance, Latin, although not a spoken language, exists as a living entity through its influence on Western philosophy, customs, and language and as the vehicle for some of history's most significant literature.

Language is learned behavior; man is not born with the knowledge of speech but must have an example to follow.

"All languages and dialects are of equal merit, each in its own way."⁵ Some people, nevertheless, consider certain languages to be more desirable than others. Among the reasons they give are the number of native speakers, the artistic merit of the literature, or even the sheer beauty of the sounds themselves. Yet, no language is either superior or inferior to another. The language of primitive people may be as sophisticated as that of civilized communities. In other words, a language that meets the needs of a social group is a satisfactory system of communication for that particular culture. If the demands of the group change, the language also will change.

Class differences inevitably arise within a culture and cause social stratification of language. These differences may be based on factors that are "educational, economic, social, or occupational . . ." in nature.⁶ In reality, "there is no such thing as good and bad (or correct and incorrect, grammatical

¹ Anthony Burgess, *Language Made Plain* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), p. 13.

² Mario Pei, *Language for Everybody* (3rd printing; New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1961), p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴ Jean Malmstrom and Annabel Ashley, *Dialects—U.S.A.* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963), pp. 4-7.

⁵ Robert A. Hall, Jr., *Linguistics and Your Language* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 6.

⁶ Pei, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

cal and ungrammatical, right and wrong) in language.⁷ There is only that which is socially acceptable. In practice what may be "accepted" as the "correct" speech by one group may be rejected by another. The divergence of patterns in sound, vocabulary, and other aspects of language can become so great that communication between groups of people can be reduced or obstructed.

To fully appreciate the benefits of a language a person must understand its nature and function. In the words of Anthony Burgess, the well-known English novelist,

... We must avoid making quick judgments, laying down the law, nursing prejudices, sneering, waving jingoistic flags, bringing a spirit of petty parochialism to the great world of human language. Languages are made by the people for the people, and people must use language as their needs dictate ... If we want to understand the phenomenon of language—and it is an astonishing one—we must approach it in humility, letting what-should-be wait upon what-is.⁸

THE DISCIPLINES ESSENTIAL TO LEARNING LANGUAGES

Among the disciplines concerned with the aspects and processes of language learning, three are classified as sciences: cultural anthropology, descriptive linguistics, and psychology.⁹ These disciplines have contributed immeasurably to the teaching of language during recent years. They have furnished knowledge of the inner workings and qualities of language and have provided deeper awareness of the manner in which language is learned.

Culture occupies a center-stage position in language teaching today. Its basic meaning, which refers to growth in animals and plants, long ago was extended to allude to education, training, tastes, and manners of people. In the nineteenth century, culture was related to intellectual achievements of different phases of civilization. Anthropologists define culture as the sum total of behavior patterns in a society. That definition has brought into focus the necessity for learning language in an authentic cultural context. Language, the central element in any culture, "is influenced by and in turn influences everything that the speaking community does"; therefore, understanding a

language assists in understanding the culture that speaks it.¹⁰

Descriptive linguistics, "the discipline which studies languages in terms of their internal structures," is concerned primarily with the "expression facet" of language.¹¹ It is also concerned with describing individual language and dialect and with developing a general theory of language. The contributions of linguistics to language learning are extensive. For example, knowledge of linguistics assists in:

- Describing what is to be taught;
- Cataloguing characteristics of a language;
- Presenting a thorough study of sounds, forms, and patterns and describing their distribution;
- Providing simple, descriptive rules of grammar;
- Furnishing information about the relation of the sounds of a language to its orthography;
- Providing techniques for ascertaining details of the language system when little is known about the language;
- Pointing out through comparison and analysis of two languages those aspects (a) which are likely to be transferred, (b) which will be difficult, (c) which will have to be unlearned, and (d) which will require new sets of habits;
- Making stress and intonation patterns obvious;
- Deciding effectively how to fix habits, how to test, and how to prepare and present teaching materials.

Psychology, the last of the three disciplines mentioned, has made available an intimate knowledge of language-learning processes. That fact is emphasized in four assumptions by Rivers:¹²

- Assumption 1. Foreign-language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation.
- Assumption 2. Language skills are learned more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented in spoken form before written form.
- Assumption 3. Analogy provides a better foundation for foreign-language learning than analysis.
- Assumption 4. The meanings which the words of a language have for

¹⁰ Pei, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹¹ H. A. Gleason, Jr., *An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics* (Rev. ed; New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1961), p. iii.

¹² Wilga M. Rivers, *The Psychologist and the Foreign-Language Teacher* (The University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 19-22.

⁷ Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁸ Burgess, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

⁹ Nelson Brooks, *Language and Language Learning: Theory and Practice* (2nd ed; New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964), p. 234.

the native speaker can be learned only in a matrix of allusions to the culture of the people who speak that language.

DEVELOPMENTS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Reference has been made to the significant contributions of anthropology, linguistics, and psychology to contemporary concepts of language learning. The conditions under which these concepts evolved should be examined briefly.

A review of foreign language teaching in the United States reveals that instructional objectives have fluctuated over the years and have reflected the changing nature of education. Prior to the establishment of public education, the majority of students were taught a foreign language (most likely French) by private tutors. The tutors, usually natives of the country whose language they taught, instructed students in the oral language. Even Latin and Greek instruction felt the influence of that emphasis.

After public education was begun in the United States, the constantly increasing number of students necessitated a larger supply of teachers. Since an adequate number of native speakers was not available to serve as teachers, the objectives of foreign language teaching were shifted to emphasize reading and writing. That change of emphasis reflected the circumstances of the times rather than the ideal outcomes of instruction. The American Classical League in 1924-25, and the Modern Language Association in 1931, issued statements which reinforced the primary stress on reading and writing.¹³ Those statements, which generated considerable controversy, nevertheless exerted a strong influence on foreign language education for a number of years.

In 1933, Bloomfield expressed one of the first opinions of the linguists and criticisms of language teaching when he observed that:

The large part of the work in high schools and colleges that has been devoted to foreign language study includes an appalling waste of effort; not one pupil in a hundred learns to speak and understand, or even to read a foreign language. The mere disciplinary or 'transfer' value of learning the arbitrary glosses of a foreign language can be safely estimated at almost nil. The realization of all this has led to much dispute, particularly as to methods of foreign language teaching. The various 'methods' which have been elaborated

differ greatly in the mere exposition, but far less in actual class room practice. The result depends very little upon the theoretical basis of presentation and very much upon the conditions of teaching and on the competence of the teacher; it is only necessary to avoid certain errors to which our tradition inclines. . . .

The pupil who takes up his first foreign language at high school age or later is likely to substitute an analysis for mere repetition and thus to meet half-way the incompetent teacher, who talks about the foreign language instead of using it. Between the two, they have kept alive the eighteenth-century scheme of pseudo-grammatical doctrine and puzzle-solving translation.¹⁴

The advice of Bloomfield and other linguists went unheeded, however, until World War II when many Americans suddenly needed to communicate with and understand people who did not speak English. Two new goals, listening comprehension and speaking, had to be added to the reading and writing objectives. The teaching profession, not prepared to know how to achieve the new objectives, turned to the linguists for assistance. Thus began a revolution in foreign language teaching that spread throughout the nation and extended beyond its boundaries to other countries.

The significant result has been not a "method" of teaching, as some think, but rather the realization by foreign language teachers that their knowledge of instruction is often inadequate for the task. For many years language programs have been directed primarily to academically talented or motivated students. A present goal of education is to find ways to make language learning a pleasant and profitable experience for all students who desire it. Many people are convinced that a more effective job of teaching all students can be done, regardless of their academic talents and motivation, and much activity is being directed toward that objective.

Many teachers now realize that if students of varying academic backgrounds and interests are to be encouraged to study other languages, they cannot all be taught the same way or the same things. Those teachers accept the fact that they need to provide materials that are directed to the diverse interests of students and to use methods of teaching that are appropriate for the individuals they teach. Individualized instruction is not new, but it is a manifestation of the dedication of many teachers to do a better job for more students.

¹³ John B. Carroll, *The Study of Language* (Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 174-172.

¹⁴ Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Holt, 1933), pp. 503, 505.

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The Language Learner

THE NATURE OF LEARNING

In viewing foreign language learning, it would be advisable to consider the nature of learning to determine if there are ways in which it may become more pleasurable and, as a result, more rewarding.

There are many concepts "... in use in education today which come from many sources and which have been the subject of promising research. These areas of research include:

1. Identification. Children learn by and through identification with others, including their parents, peers, and teachers. Thus it is important that they have good models.
2. Learning by Discovery. Gaining knowledge for oneself by the use of one's own mind frequently has advantages in terms of motivation, organization, of what is learned, retention, and meaningfulness.
3. Empathy. Openness, trust, and security in human relationships free intelligence and enable boys and girls, and teachers as well, to learn more and to be more successful in activities in which they are jointly engaged.
4. Culture Potential. Anthropological studies have emphasized that different societies and cultures cultivate different qualities and capacities. Learning experiences that build on the cultural capacities of individuals and groups are particularly successful.
5. Knowledge about Learners. Research has shown that students learn more when teachers know them as individuals.
6. Methods of Increasing Transfer. When the teacher points out the possibility of transfer and develops and applies generalizations with the learners, transfer is more likely to occur.
7. Zeal for Learning and Knowledge. Students learn to like learning from teachers who love knowledge, from communities that provide resources for learning, and from a home environment which supports the search for knowledge by example and by the materials provided."¹

Motivation for learning is increased if the students have a sense of belonging and being wanted, are free from undue pressure, and have an opportunity for success and recognition and a feeling of self-respect. The learning environment must provide opportunities for self-direction and materials which are of immediate interest and which they can relate to the world in which they live.

LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

"The successful language learner is essentially the pupil who has, consciously or not, devised a successful self-teaching method."² The teacher may help students develop such a method by suggesting that they:

- Mimic the model as closely as possible. (If they have the advantage of observing a native speaker, the students should try to form the sounds in the same way that he or she does; i.e. by shaping the mouth and positioning the tongue in an identical manner.)
- Practice making the foreign language sounds aloud in front of a mirror. (This helps to develop proper articulation.)
- Memorize all material as requested. (Memorization is one of the basic ingredients of language learning, since it provides ready patterns for communication.)
- Always understand the meaning of what they hear and say.
- Strive for fluency in all language skills. (Halting speech causes a breakdown in communication because it alters intonation patterns and, therefore, the intended meaning of what is said.)
- Strive for accuracy in the spoken word. Effective foreign language habits are established by using correct speech patterns.

¹ Glen Hass and Kimball Wiles, editors, *Readings in Curriculum* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), pp. 182-183.

² Robert L. Politzer, *Foreign Language Learning: A Linguistic Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1965), p. 13.

- Review constantly the material they have studied. (Only through review and reinforcement can new language habits become automatic.)
- Avoid the use of English in the classroom; otherwise, the native language habits will interfere with progress in learning a second language.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to use the foreign language: during school, with visitors, in the community, and at home. Refrain from asking too many questions beginning with "Why . . . ?" Language is arbitrary, not logical. More useful questions begin with "What?" or "How?"
- Learn to listen and concentrate on what is being said. (Careful listening not only shows consideration for the speaker, but brings a reward in information gained. The students will understand directions more fully and, thus, will avoid interrupting class activities unnecessarily by asking for a repetition of instructions.)
- Be neat and accurate in written work. (Special care must be exercised in writing a language which uses a system and an alphabet which are different from the native language.)
- Accept cultural taboos of the people whose language is being studied.
- Avoid being overly critical of what is different in the foreign culture. (Students should examine their own behavior and situations which are parallel to those found in the other culture and then make objective observations and comparisons.)

To facilitate further language learning and to achieve the desired outcomes, the students must:

- Establish realistic goals. Students should not expect to gain instant control of the language; instead, they should understand that such control will take time, patience, and hard work.
- Understand that what they are learning is worthwhile and contributes to their growth and development.
- Develop self-discipline in promptness, adherence to assigned tasks, and scheduling work-study activities. Students should realize that frequent study sessions of relatively short duration are more effective than lengthy ones spaced farther apart.
- Maintain an alert posture at all times; otherwise, learning attitudes and habits will suffer. Students who sit in a slouched position often encounter difficulty in projecting their voices. Those who speak while resting

the hand against the mouth or chin distort the sounds they utter.

- Accept their responsibility to the school by exercising proper care of the laboratory and classroom facilities, audiovisual aids, and study materials.
- Accept their responsibility to the class by cooperating with fellow students in class activities.

AGE AND LEARNING

Each age group brings its own characteristics to the learning situation. As a result, the objectives, activities, content, and materials must differ for students of various ages.

Some characteristics, objectives, activities, and materials pertaining to students in elementary, junior high, and senior high schools are listed below. Furthermore, individuals vary within age groups. The senior high school sometimes includes students who have had a foreign language for a number of years, as well as those who are beginners. The experienced language student in the eleventh grade is more capable of preparing a critique than is a student in the second year of study. Teacher discretion must be fully utilized in interpreting the listing of objectives, activities, and materials. Borrowing from across age boundaries is often necessary to meet the needs of all individuals and classes.

In preparing this information on characteristics of the various age groups and the objectives, content, and materials appropriate for them, *A Guide for Instruction in Modern Foreign Languages, Grades 4-12* was used extensively.³ The reader who wishes more detailed information concerning ages and levels of instruction should consult that publication.

The Elementary School Child

Characteristics

The elementary school child:

1. Has a remarkably flexible speech mechanism and capacity for language learning
2. Is prone to imitating
3. Has a natural propensity for rapid vocabulary expansion
4. Possesses an unquenchable curiosity
5. Is enthusiastic about learning
6. Participates eagerly
7. Has few inhibitions

³ State of Minnesota, *A Guide for Instruction in Modern Foreign Languages: Grades 4-12*. Curriculum Bulletin No. 27 (St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Education, 1965), pp. 29-55.

Objectives of the Program

Most elementary school foreign language programs are designed:

1. To develop motivation towards language study and interests in people who speak other languages
2. To establish basic pronunciation and intonation patterns which are near native in authenticity
3. To introduce the study of another culture

Program Activities

Program activities generally include:

1. Emphasis on mimicry activities
 - a. Dialogues
 - b. Skits
 - c. Drills
 - d. Copying
2. Games, songs, poems
3. Presentation of a variety of authentic models

Program Content

The following content areas might be considered:

1. School: classes, teachers, classmates, extra-curricular activities
2. Home: family, foods, leisure, houses
3. Individual: health practices, hobbies, everyday habits
4. Social life: parties, vacations, friends, holidays, special events such as visits to zoos, circuses

Materials Especially Useful for Instruction

Popular among foreign language programs in elementary schools are:

1. Teacher guides
2. Picture books
3. Elementary books in the language
4. Tape, disc recordings
5. Puppets
6. Pictures
7. Props such as pop bottles, pans, dishes, dolls

The Junior High School Student

Characteristics

The characteristics of this age group are better described than enumerated.

Junior high or middle school students are just that: they are in the middle. They are part children and part adults, and they often show characteristics of both age groups in their responses to stimuli. They look for action and serious talk. They seek to retain childhood security and obtain adult freedoms. They are becoming aware of sex differ-

ences; boys are aloof from girls and their world, yet are attracted by them. Girls are usually more mature physically and intellectually. Junior high school students are more analytical than younger students. They generalize better and are more capable of dealing in abstracts and using symbols. They can assimilate more intensive training. Time, colors, and mathematics are more meaningful to them. Their memory and attention spans are longer.

Objectives of the Program

To continue or initiate the development of foreign language learning in the junior high school, the following objectives are usually incorporated into the program:

1. The ability to understand what an educated native says when he or she is enunciating carefully and speaking simply on a familiar topic
2. The ability to talk on prepared topics without faltering and to use accurately common expressions needed for traveling in a foreign country
3. The ability to read (without translation) fiction and non-fiction commonly found in the foreign culture for children of junior high age
4. The ability to compose simple reports, friendly letters, and skits based on material which has been learned orally

In addition to the linguistic objectives, efforts are made to motivate students to study languages, to develop interest in and knowledge and tolerance of other people, and to develop an understanding of the nature of language, how it works, and how it is used.

Program Activities

Program activities for the junior high school foreign language program include:

1. Conversation
2. Pronunciation drills
3. Dialogues
4. Songs, games
5. Skits, dramatizations
6. Group work
7. Reading simple non-fiction, biography, history, plays, short stories, letters, cultural information
8. Copying and dictation
9. Recombination activities in all four skills
10. Summaries, questions and answers, narrations
11. Reorganization of jumbled sentences
12. Written transformation drills

13. Written summaries, letters, *resumés*, answers to questions, and other controlled writing assignments
14. Reference to grammar for clarification, insight, and summary
15. Oral and written reports
16. Role playing, such as selling a product, telling a joke, presenting a newscast or weather report, presenting a how-to-do-it demonstration
17. Use of public libraries and other non-school sources
18. Expressing oral or written opinions

Program Content

Topics for consideration include:

1. Hobbies, sports, recreation
2. Home life
3. School life
4. Heroes
5. Animals
6. History, geography
7. Art, music, customs
8. Science
9. Adventure
10. Dress, fashion
11. Foods
12. Humor
13. Family
14. Education
15. Politics, government
16. Careers
17. Current events, world affairs
18. Mores, customs

Materials Especially Useful for Instruction

Among the materials which might be used are:

1. Films, slides, filmstrips, and pictures
2. Texts
3. Maps
4. Reference books
5. Magazines, especially student magazines
6. Tape and disc recordings

The Senior High School Student

Characteristics

The senior high school student:

1. Becomes increasingly analytical
2. Is interested in real life: work, career, education
3. Seeks independence from adults
4. Seeks status among peers
5. Possesses more inhibitions than the junior high student

6. Is interested in abstraction and solving problems
7. Becomes less imitative as he or she grows older
8. Develops a philosophy
9. Is concerned with interrelationships (such as a means of seeking scientific information or humanistic insights)

Objectives of the Program

The objectives guiding the foreign language program in the high school attempt:

1. To foster interest in language learning
2. To develop appreciation for the role that a foreign language can play in education, careers, leisure
3. To develop cross-cultural insights
4. To develop understanding of language and how it works
5. To develop the ability to communicate as young adults with native speakers on familiar topics of adult interest, according to the amount of time they have spent in language study (short or long sequence)
6. To develop the writing skill subsequent to teaching the speaking skill
7. To develop the reading skill (in accordance with the amount of time they have spent in language study), using material of different types that native speakers of their own age might read

Program Activities

The following activities might be included for use in secondary school foreign language programs:

1. Use of different models
2. Some continued memorization
3. Dramatization
4. Questions and answers
5. Group work
6. Directed dialogue
7. Oral and written reports
8. Role playing
9. Discussion
10. Guided reading from non-text sources
11. Expressing oral or written opinions
12. Use of libraries and other non-school sources
13. Writing critiques, interpretations and evaluations of literature, art, music, speeches, events
14. Limited creative activities such as writing short poems, stories
15. Writing grammatical drills previously practiced orally

Program Content

Topics can be chosen from an extensive list:

1. History
2. Sports, hobbies
3. Fashions, dress
4. Family
5. Education
6. Politics, government
7. Science
8. Literature
9. Careers
10. Current events, world affairs
11. Romance
12. Mores, customs

Materials Especially Useful for Instruction

The variety of materials that are useful in the high school program is extensive. Included are:

1. Reference books (atlases, encyclopedias, dictionaries)
2. Texts
3. Maps
4. Films, filmstrips, slides
5. Magazines
6. Foreign radio broadcasts
7. Recordings of music, drama, lectures, conversations
8. Supplementary reading material of various levels and content

Foreign Languages and Today's Student

All educators, those who organize and administer and those who teach, constantly must be aware of the implications that human growth and development have for the education of children.

What is learning? It is a multi-faceted process which involves needs, procedures, and styles. It is a private affair which is based on early cultural patterns. It is, in the last analysis, a nebulous entity which conceals far more than it reveals.

We are determined to educate the children of the United States. We are determined to help them learn. If someone has an idea about how one child learns or all children learn, we are receptive and ready to test the idea. Somehow we must permit children to grow beyond the state of the inquisitive toddler without losing the joy of learning.⁴

In 1970, the Northeast Conference devoted one of its sessions to the "new" foreign language stu-

dent.⁵ Increasingly the "new" students are found in our foreign language classes, and they should be made to feel welcome. They can be described in several ways. They will not necessarily attend college. They may not be near the top of any of the school's academic rankings. They do not necessarily have a C average in English. They are most likely not interested in conjugating verbs and memorizing grammar rules. Traditional reasons for studying languages do not concern them. They are aware that the old cliché, "The world is getting smaller," is rapidly becoming more of a reality. They know that more visitors from abroad are coming to the United States each year as tourists and as business representatives and that more Americans are going abroad for the same reasons. The future is nebulous to them, but they suspect that some day, somewhere, they might have occasion to use another language.

If the profession is to accept the "new" students in spirit as well as in fact, philosophical and pedagogical changes must occur rapidly.

First, "new" teachers are needed for the "new" students. They must be "new" in philosophy, in their attitudes toward the students, in proficiency in the language they teach, in their knowledge of language and how it works, in personal acquaintance with the cultures represented by the language they teach, in ability to use a variety of instructional methods and teaching materials, in their fervor to continue professional self-development, and even in personality. A deficiency in any one of these areas will severely limit their effectiveness in dealing with the "new" students.

Traditionally, students have enrolled in foreign language classes mostly to meet requirements and for extrinsic reasons. There are many potential "new" students who might be interested in language study if the profession let them know they were welcome. Recruiting, therefore, is essential. The most effective recruiting is through successful teaching that generates a contagious response among students. Volume 7 of this series illustrates many ways in which language teachers can actively seek to create better public relations for their area of the curriculum.

Besides recruiting students teachers must inform counselors, principals, other administrators, and parents of the new attitude of the profession, for these groups are influential in developing and maintaining foreign language programs.

The greater range of intelligence, aptitude, academic performance, and motivation evident in the

⁴ Donald H. Clark, editor, *The Psychology of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 178.

⁵ Joseph A. Tursi, editor, *Foreign Languages and the 'New' Student*, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1970, Reports of the Working Committees (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Company, Inc.)

"new" students requires more individualization. As one young teacher said, "I just realized that you couldn't teach them all alike." While there was nothing new in that statement it did reflect an awareness that the old cliché was true. Ways must be found to individualize the content, the methods, and the pace of learning in foreign language classes. Volume 4 deals with a more extensive analysis of this issue.

The profession needs to be more alert to the interests of the "new" students. For too long, the activities of foreign language classes have been determined exclusively by the teacher and the heritage of professional thinking that he or she brought to the job. To listen to the students is not to abandon the teacher's role to their desires. Instead, it indicates concern for the students' interests in determining the direction of learning.

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